

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

September 6, 1920, but he was mistaken in doing so because much had changed in Iran since then. Since Reza's advent to power had created an entirely new situation in Iran, it would be dangerous to apply to it the precepts that were good for another period. Iran, according to Irandust, has entered the epoch of capitalism with absolutist monarchy as her political form. Hence she faced new problems. "The main problem of Persia's development/' concluded Irandust,

turns out to be the question whether she can skip the phase of a slow ripening of capitalism and the period of absolutist monarchy . . . and pass directly to the democracy of her working classes. The theses on the national and colonial question of the Second Congress of the Comintern foresee the possibility of such a skipping if the popular masses of the backward countries are given help by the enlightened proletariat of advanced countries. Persia, no doubt, presents a typical picture of a delayed development caused by imperialism. And it remains to . . . diagnose how much the existing international situation favors the solution of the Persian problem by way of such a "jump." ⁿ

This controversy among Soviet orientalist experts is revealing in many ways. The impression one obtains is that the second school of thought seems to get an upper hand. *Novy Vostok*, an officially sponsored Soviet publication, never gave Vissanov a chance to reply to his opponents, whereas the latter were given ample opportunity to express their views. Thus, according to the Soviet viewpoint, Reza Shah's regime represented a national liberation movement of anti-imperialist and semi bourgeois character. As such, the regime had to be supported by Soviet Russia, particularly wherever

it happened to
clash with British interests. In practice this was more
or less the atti-
tude that the Soviet government adopted. Self-
restraint was prac-
ticed in the whole northern oil controversy, and
Soviet displeasure
over Iran's dealings with American and British
companies never went
beyond the limits of diplomatic protests. On the other
hand, Russia
either overtly supported Iran or at least sided with
her in such
Iranian-British controversies as those over Semnan oil
or the Bahrein
Islands. Naturally the best solution for Russia
would have been

11 "Zametki o Smenie Rezhima v Persyi," *Novy Vostok*, no. 15,
p. 63.